

DRAFT¹
Beyond Waste Stakeholders Meeting Notes
June 25, 2003

The fourth meeting of the SWAC Beyond Waste Subcommittee convened at 9:00 a.m. in Seattle, Washington. Attending the meeting were: Darlene Frye, Chris Chapman, Marvin Vialle, Jeff Kelley-Clarke, Craig Lorch, David Stitzhal, Cullen Stephenson, Jerry Smedes, Cheryl Smith, Dennis Durbin, Bill Reed, Marc Daudon, Suellen Mele, Shidong Zhang, Gene Eckhardt, Norm LeMay and Brad Lovaas. Dee Endelman facilitated the meeting and Eli Asher took notes.

Desired Outcomes:

- Follow up discussion on priority Beyond Waste initiatives
- Ideas on how to carry forward the work of this Subcommittee
- Input on specific issues regarding current solid waste system (local government funding, closed & abandoned landfills)
- Listing and discussion of other priority items regarding the current solid waste system

Follow-Up Discussion of Beyond Waste

The group reviewed the agenda (Attachment 1) for the day. The facilitator reviewed the results of the “full body survey” from the last meeting of the Subcommittee. The facilitator listed the following concerns she had heard voiced during this survey:

- Specific responsibilities of the various entities need to be detailed.
- Governance, roles and responsibilities and funding are the three most important issues: we need to see specifics in these areas.
- Funding issues need to be identified and rectified. Benefits will not be immediately apparent to consumers; anything that is done at a customer’s expense should be to their benefit.
- Waste haulers have become tax collectors for municipalities.
- We need to know how this affects water, air, and energy issues. Specifically, we are looking for more benefits to small Eastern Washington counties.
- The current system should be the basis and resource for, rather than victim of, changes. This plan needs to be flexible in order to fulfill the needs of diverse communities, not “one size fits all.”
- The state needs to take a leadership role in making these changes to the current system.

¹ Finalized notes will include the attachments referred to in this document.

- The government sector takes a long time to plan, as well as act. This plan should more closely resemble a private business plan: clean, compact, and achievable.
- Also, “Beyond Waste” seems to assume that we have done all that we can to collect recyclables. We need to continue to focus on those outstanding commodities.
- Beyond Waste needs to be authorized and sponsored at the highest levels of state government. We also need wider approval by other groups in the public as well as the private sector.
- Before committing to a plan like this, the financial implications must be clear.
- “Horizontal Height Regulation” type problems need to be eliminated before these initiatives can be implemented.
- Political will and leadership needs to be stronger in order to push this plan to completion. Ecology must be willing to take leadership and upset some people.
- The vision is worthwhile, but the action plan needs more detail, as well as more emphasis on partnerships.
- Want to be assured that whatever is done is in the best interests of consumers.
- When the major recycling effort took effect in 1989, there was social and political energy around recycling that does not exist today.
- We are beyond any fast and easy solutions. In order to be effective, good intentions need to be backed by solid detail.
- More outreach to affected groups.

Individual participants added to her list:

- Is public and political support for this type of program currently sufficient?
- There may be difficulties with promoting this type of plan in the legislature as a result of insufficient support.
- Participants want to see more detail with respect to the individual initiatives.
- We need to examine more thoroughly why and how we are measuring waste.

Following this discussion, group members discussed questions listed on the agenda as follows:

Q: What actions should we take to further develop ideas from these meetings?

Members discussed the following ideas:

- Manufacturer take-back should be examined as a long-term solution to bulky items that make up a large portion of self-hauled waste.
- In order to be effective, Beyond Waste initiatives need to be easy and convenient, as well as cost little or no money up-front to customers.

- Ending self-haul of solid waste by moving towards a universal-type service to meet all collection needs could be a beneficial step in achieving the Beyond Waste Vision:
 - A bulky item collection system could be a good first step in reducing self-haul.
 - This would reduce roadside litter.
 - Eliminating self-haul would save money for transfer and disposal facilities.
 - Increased minimum fees for self-haul could also be used to reduce self-haul.
- Several participants raised additional challenges and considerations of ending self-haul. They include:
 - Customers have reacted strongly when self-haul recycling opportunities have been reduced. It is expected that many would oppose a universal collection system.
 - There are political challenges associated with banning self-haul.
 - A very strong education program would be needed to help create a paradigm change away from the perceived "right" to self-haul.
 - Customers need convenience: a universal collection system would have to meet all of their disposal needs.
 - Meeting the needs of rural areas would be very challenging; these needs are different than those of semi-rural areas and semi-urban areas.
 - Costs to rural counties for universal-type hauling would need to be addressed.
 - This idea needs further exploration and research.

Q: What other actions does Ecology need to take?

Participants discussed their desire to continue being involved in the process of developing the Plan. A number of participants said that they would like to see Plan text as a next step. The group decided that it wants to reconvene once such text is developed. Participants also stressed the importance of involving other stakeholder groups, such as the businesses impacted by the initiatives (e.g., architects, contractors, businesses who use hazardous materials and/or generate industrial wastes).

Q: What does Ecology need to do to make this work?

- Ecology needs to engage in continued education and outreach. Ideas in the initiatives need to be explained to different stakeholder groups "in their own language" to avoid misunderstandings. Ecology also must explain the philosophy behind the initiatives the necessity for their implementation.

- Participants expressed varying opinions about whether or not to make a link between health concerns and the Beyond Waste Project. Participants also discussed how such a link should be made. One participant noted that, since modern landfills are built in manner that effectively contains most hazardous wastes, the Beyond Waste Project should be dissociated with health concerns involving landfills. Another participant voiced concern that, even with the superior technology of modern landfills, some wastes, such as mercury, can still escape. Several participants agreed that the best way to deal with health concerns about hazardous wastes such as mercury is to keep them out of the waste stream entirely by eliminating them from consumer products.
- Making a strong link between Beyond Waste and the governor's sustainability initiatives will increase political will behind this project.
- Sustainability is becoming more important to a growing number of people. This may be the right language for the current time period. Connecting the language between this project and various sustainability-related efforts would be helpful.
- The five initiatives should be prioritized by Ecology to convey what must be started first. So many actions and goals are contained in the draft initiatives that it is difficult to consider them as a whole. Ecology should keep in mind the "bang for the buck" principle when prioritizing issues in Beyond Waste.

Q: What needs to be done to shape this plan to make it work for various stakeholder groups, as well as present it to those stakeholder groups?

- Stakeholder groups should continue to be included in the process so that the Project is not stalled later on by conflict.
- Not all sectors are represented on the Subcommittee. Retailers and manufacturers of products that have been discussed should be included in the process in order to avoid conflict later in the Project.
- Promotion of public meetings needs to be thorough in order to include all stakeholder groups.
- Public meetings should be held in a manner that allows full stakeholder participation regardless of their perceived primary role in the waste stream.

Local Government Funding Study

Cheryl Smith introduced the Local Government Funding Study by explaining that Shidong Zhang and David Reich (Ecology economists) conducted the study in

consultation with numerous outside parties, including experts and economists from various state agencies as well as from outside Washington State.

Cheryl introduced Jeff Kelley-Clarke to illustrate one of the potential economic problems about which counties are concerned. Jeff distributed a sheet entitled "Illustration of the Effect of Tonnage Loss on Tip Fees" (Attachment 2) that outlines the problem, as well as one potential solution. Jeff explained that increases in tip fees are politically sensitive, regardless of their minimal effect on collection fees, so counties cannot rely on increased tip fees to cover the reduction in tonnage and added non-disposal costs associated with Beyond Waste initiatives. One solution would be to cover non-disposal costs (such as debt on composting facilities and cost of waste diversion initiatives) through some means other than tip fees, such as a per household fee.

Group members had a number of questions regarding the assumptions underlying the analysis and voiced the following comments:

- Part of the reluctance to increase tip fees is due to consumer perception of the value of non-disposal activities and programs. Part of the challenge is to help consumers see the benefits of these Beyond Waste initiatives.
- Any increase in tip fees would directly affect self-haulers, which might cause more illegal dumping and hauling to cheaper facilities in other counties.
- This model does not take into account recycling and yard waste streams, which would drive up customer costs.

Marvin Vialle and Shidong Zhang gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Local Government Funding Study (Attachment 3). The group discussed some of the issues and alternatives presented, including a discussion of the validity of the figures presented as examples. Individual group members asked the following questions:

Q: Why are education and landfill monitoring put together in the "fixed costs" category?

A: Landfill monitoring refers not only to closed landfills, but also to monitoring operational landfills. This is part of the fixed cost of doing business, as is the cost of education.

Q: Would the variable fee be mandated by haulers, or by government?

A: The collection customers would pay the variable fee through the haulers. Self-haulers would pay an increase in fees at transfer stations.

Q: How would universal fees be levied fairly?

A: All people would pay the universal (per household) fees, since society as a whole benefits. For example, illegal dumpers would be paying in part for cleaning up their mess, while “extreme” recyclers would be paying for expensive recycling programs.

Q: Could a variable fee (or incentive) be used for varying levels of usage for facilities such as Moderate Risk Waste (MRW)?

A: There is a cost involved in operating facilities such as MRW drops, but that cost is covered by the overall solid waste budget, since the facilities benefit society as a whole.

In addition to the above questions, individual group members had the following comments:

- The terms used in this study are confusing and need to be clarified.
- Local officials have said that the capacity to create tax incentives for implementation of plans such as this is very important to them.
- Utilizing haulers as tax collectors (through increases in collection fees) will open the door to more bureaucracy and will drive away collection customers.
- Private landfills do not fit into this funding system. Without contract revision, tax dollars from universal fees could not go to private landfills in the form of subsidies. This would give county landfills a competitive advantage over private landfills.
- Concern that decrease in revenue for private landfills may not be linked to a decrease in disposal.
- This is a critical issue: if these funding problems are not solved, progressive programs such as many recycling, waste reduction and MRW collections may be dropped to save money.
- If a fee (other than the tip fee) is initiated, it is critical that it cover only non-disposal costs. All disposal costs, regardless of whether they are fixed or variable, should continue to be covered in the tipping fee to reflect the true cost of garbage.
- One participant suggested using county-mandated collection and disposal districts as two possible solutions. Another participant commented that disposal districts, while well suited to rural counties, would not work in more populous

counties because the districts would need approval from all cities and towns in that county.

Representatives from Counties noted their long-term concern that costs associated with Beyond Waste initiatives would need to be addressed as disposal tonnage is reduced. Other participants agreed that county costs need to be part of the formula to make the Beyond Waste program successful. One participant noted the importance of linking fees to results so that the link between money spent and the benefits of less waste are evident, i.e., it is clear that the money goes directly towards reducing waste.

The facilitator asked what could be done to start the process of implementing the Beyond Waste Plan given the associated financial issues that the group had been discussing. Generally, participants recognized the importance of keeping funding issues “on the radar screen”. Individual group members had the following comments:

- Small, incremental shifts need to be made. The funding associated with these shifts need to be addressed as the shifts are made.
- Smaller programs, such as bulky waste pickup service, would not cost much to initiate, and could provide the starting point for other collection systems.
- A 30-year plan that aims at Beyond Waste with a notation that funding may be an issue later on would be a good way to start.
- One participant voiced concern that Beyond Waste would not receive the funding necessary to begin the implementation phase of the Project. Another participant responded that there were several small steps at county level that could be taken at little cost to counties. The funding would be a problem only when those programs became very successful.
- One participant voiced concern that issues such as food waste (and the cost impacts of its diversion from the waste stream) might keep participants from initiating and promoting these Beyond Waste programs. Another responded that the composting industry is moving fast: right now, composters cannot keep up with capacity demand. This is a sign that the time might be right for the organics initiative.

Closed and Abandoned Landfills

Cheryl Smith introduced the issue of closed and abandoned landfills. During the roundtable discussions, closed and abandoned landfills had been called out as an important issue. According to local governments, these landfills are not being adequately addressed. The handout distributed during the previous meeting outlined

some approximate costs of dealing with the landfills (Attachment 4). Ecology staff explained some of the difficulties in quantifying the closed and abandoned landfill problem, and asked the group for opinions on the relative importance of the problem, as well as suggestions for how – if at all – it should be addressed in the Beyond Waste Plan. The group discussed several aspects of the issue. Several group members provided the following comments:

- The issue should be included in the Beyond Waste Plan.
- It has low level of urgency.
- The problem needs more definition and prioritization so that certain high-risk landfills are addressed.
- Historic memory from individuals who used the old landfills should be utilized to identify old landfills while still possible.
- Use first 5 years of the plan to identify sites for attention.

Waste to Energy Presentation

Philip Schmidt-Pathman and his associate from a company called WRSI joined the meeting briefly to give a presentation on the advantages of waste to energy programs. They talked about projects occurring in Germany, which suggest that the economics of waste energy are sound over time. They described a tire-burning project.

Other Discussion Topics

Referring to the draft Plan outline distributed at the last meeting, Cheryl Smith reviewed with the group other topics that stakeholder groups have raised in the past as possible topics needing to be addressed in the Plan. She listed these on the flip chart, noting those topics that she believes are already incorporated into the draft outline of the Plan, e.g., within the Beyond Waste Initiatives. The group added thoughts and discussed the listed issues. Below are the flip chart notes, as expanded by the group:

Other Topics for the Beyond Waste Plan

- Landfills and Disposal facilities
 - Acknowledge successes the current solid waste disposal system
 - State policy for siting future disposal facilities.
- Recycling market development (locally as well as nationally)

- Addressing Special Waste Streams (tires) (currently partially addressed in Plan)
- The real (internalized and currently external) costs of generating and managing solid wastes
- Changing behavior and attitudes (currently addressed in Plan)
- Consumer and Industry incentives (currently addressed in Plan)
- Roles, Authorities, coordination (especially within regulatory issues)
- Waste prevention (currently addressed in Plan)
- Collection system
- Using the plan as a comprehensive resource
 - Solid Waste in Washington State Annual Report is becoming the source of the future for comprehensive information on the solid waste system
- Roll-up of local plans (currently partially addressed in Plan)
- Product Stewardship (currently addressed in Plan)
- More background information needed (currently addressed in Plan)
- Economic development
 - Local businesses using locally recycled products as feedstock

The group asked several questions about the above list:

Q: "Real" costs are difficult to quantify: how detailed will they be? What hard science is there to back it them up?

A: There is an issue paper on the subject. The question is: to what degree will it be included in the plan? Also, there is a big difference between universal agreement and good science. Good scientists can still disagree on what would constitute "real" costs. The issue paper addresses the issue of complete versus incomplete costs. The term "real" is misleading.

Q: Will all of the issue papers be included in the final plan text?

A: No.

Q: Will all of the things on the list be in the plan?

A: Some of them are already addressed in the plan; the rest have been suggested by other stakeholders for inclusion. The purpose of this discussion is to get the Subcommittee's input on whether the topics should be included or not.

Q: There was a huge effort during the last solid waste plan to move toward recycling. Identifying what we have done would be good, as well as noting that there is still a lot left to do on this topic.

A: Section 14 of the Plan is dedicated to current system analysis. Section 15 focuses on what has been accomplished since the last plan, and what still needs to be done.

Q: Hazardous waste does not seem to have been addressed. Are there any other ways to address it?

A: Hazardous waste will have its own section of the plan. We are in the process of developing ideas on this; focus groups are currently being organized to address hazardous waste issues.

In addition to questions, some individual group members voiced the following comments:

- The inclusion of the term "real" costs is problematic.
- Despite problems with quantification, some discussion of "real" costs such as externalized landfill costs should be included in the plan.
- Performance measures and roles and authorities should be imbedded in each initiative instead of, or in addition to, being treated as separate entities.

Cheryl asked the group for input on how much detail on the solid waste system should be included in the Plan versus the annual report noted above. Several participants responded that the annual report should be a complete resource for waste information in the state. The Plan should serve as guidance for local jurisdictions. Cheryl thanked all of the group members for their participation in the meetings.

The facilitator outlined the next steps for the group:

- We will send out final notes for the first session (May 29, 2003) within the next few days and draft notes for the remaining meetings (June 5, June 17 and June 25) over the coming weeks.

- Information gathered from this Subcommittee will be presented to SWAC on July 15.
- Ecology will contact this Subcommittee within approximately six weeks to update them on the status of the project.

Note: On July 22, 2003, Sally Toteff – who was unable to attend Meeting #4 – sent some comments to share with the Subcommittee regarding closed and abandoned landfills. These comments are attached (Attachment 5).